



Community Garden Coordinator Handbook



Compiled by Marion-Polk Food Share Staff
and Community Volunteers.

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Forward

Dear Garden Coordinator,

Welcome, and thank you for entering the world of community garden coordination. Community gardens are amazing community builders, beautifiers of urban blight, and sources of fresh, healthy food. We are so happy that you will be working alongside us to make our community a better place.

My first role at Marion-Polk Food Share was with our garden program, so I have a keen respect for all that our garden coordinators contribute. As a coordinator, you will be challenged, impressed, surprised, and have a lot of fun along the way. One thing that always sticks with me: you are doing more coordination than gardening. You don't need a green thumb to be a great garden coordinator, just patience, ability to set clear expectations, and a love for people and community.

Remember, we cannot do this without you. Because of you, families across Marion and Polk Counties will enjoy nutritious produce grown with their own hands. Communities will come together, share food, and become stronger. Neighborhoods will flourish and gardens will grow. Thank you for dedicating your time and energy in this way.

With that, dig in to this wonderful resource, the Community Garden Coordinator Handbook.



Ian Dixon-McDonald
Vice President of Programs
Marion-Polk Food Share



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Chapter One: Coordinating a Garden

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- *Spotlight: John Knox Community Garden*
- Helpful Documents: Website Resources
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- Gardener Recruitment and Orientation
- Gardening Maintenance



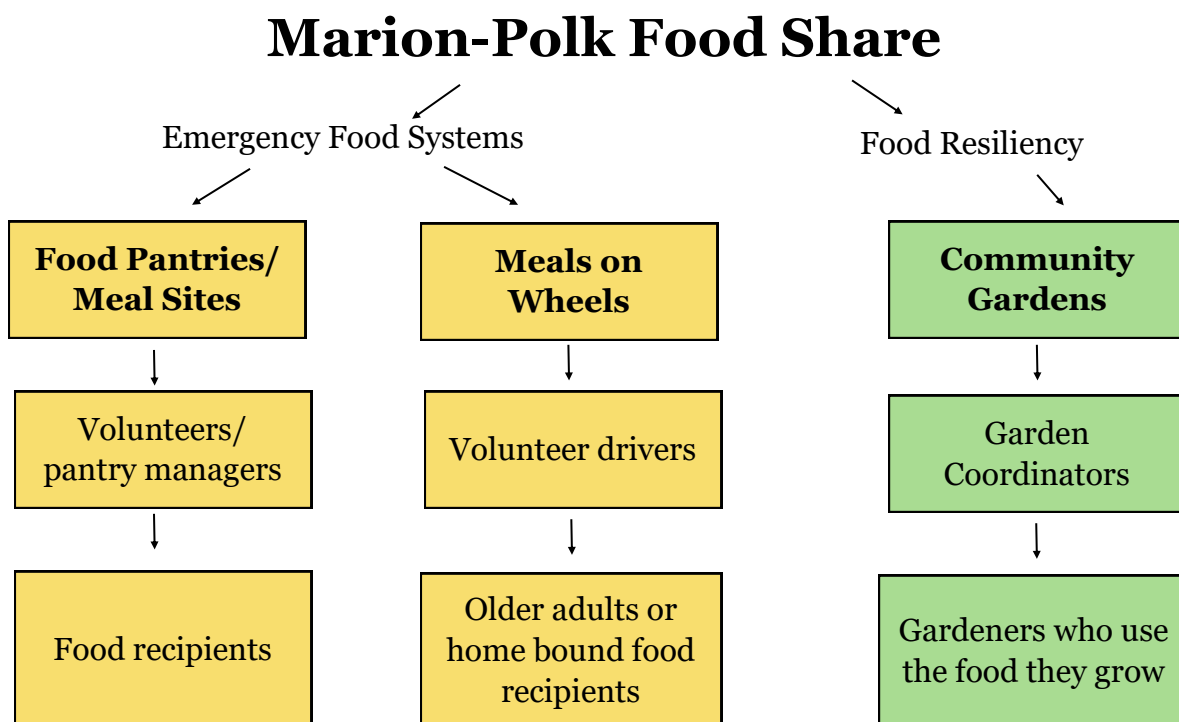
Who is Marion-Polk Food Share?

Marion-Polk Food Share is the regional food bank for Marion and Polk counties. Our primary focus is to distribute emergency food to our food pantries and meal sites throughout Marion and Polk Counties. Food pantries provide enough food for 3-5 days for a family, but we know that this isn't a long-term solution to food insecurity. Back in 2005, the Food Share connected with existing gardens in Salem to create the garden network to help families and individuals grow food for themselves.

It is important for you to understand who the Food Share is, what we do, and how community gardens fit in to our mission. This will not only illuminate the bigger picture of what Community Gardens do, but will help you understand why a food bank supports gardening efforts and what resources we have to offer. This chart helps explain the ways we distribute food within our community, and how gardens play a role in our work.



The Marion-Polk Food Share Network Chart



General Community Garden Information

Reducing the Need

Marion Polk Food Share has been offering food resources since 1987, but we have not seen the need for food go away. Because food pantries cannot be the sole source of food for families, we are also invested in doing work that will help lessen that need in the first place. This includes many different forms of programming such as job training, community organizing, the Meals on Wheels program, as well as facilitating the process for people to learn and grow food. When people can grow food for themselves, they can reduce dollars spent, they don't need to wait to get a food box, and they have more room in their budget for household priorities.



Community Gardens Overview

Our Community Garden network serves over 60 garden locations. The exact number of community gardens in the Food Share network changes from year to year as we onboard new gardens, or some communities choose to change their program priorities. We want to keep our gardens consistent and sustainable, so we are working to help coordinators and gardeners make a long-term community impact.

The goal of the garden program is to create space for community members to learn gardening practices and be able to grow food for themselves and their families. Therefore, most of our gardens serve a population that could benefit from the food security of learning to grow their own food.



Benefits of All Community Gardens:

There are different models of community gardens, all with their own character, values, and needs. Gardening in a community brings education, nutrition, exercise, fresh food, engagement, beautification, cultural values, and more, to a neighborhood.

The main benefit that Marion-Polk Food Share supports is the ability of individuals to feed themselves with food they want to eat. This can be accomplished through gardening, and all the additional benefits will surely follow.

Community Garden Network Classifications

We classify gardens in our network in order to help us allocate our resources based on how closely a garden serves our mission to help end hunger. This allows us to prioritize helping families who have trouble finding food, and connect them with community gardens in their area to grow food for themselves.

It is helpful to know where your garden fits under our classification system, so you can see not only what resources are offered but what kind of responsibilities are expected from you based on your garden type. Within each priority, we also have different kinds of community gardens. Because community gardens can fulfill a multitude of purposes for different groups, there are different models; here are our most common:

Priority 1: Core Gardens

Public/private plot rental gardens serving low-income population

1A: Public plot rental style

1B: Youth/school garden

1C: Rental plots for specific group

1D: Communal garden in a low-income neighborhood

Priority 2: Supported Gardens

Public/private plot rental gardens mainly serving middle-income population

2A: Public plot rental style

2B: Youth/school garden

2E: Donation garden

Youth/School Gardens:

This classification is mainly used for school or after-school programming by teachers or volunteers, and are often facilitated by groups like the Salem-Keizer Education Foundation or Boys & Girls Clubs. These programs conduct after-school gardening programs for Title 1 school children and maintain those gardens during the school year and in the summer.

Public Plot Rental:

This is the most common community garden model. Someone becomes a volunteer leader for the garden which is comprised of rental plots and is involved in the organization of the garden and its members. Each garden has its unique look and feel, which is largely dependent on the community involved. In the garden network, we most directly support priority 1 core gardens in this capacity, many of which are low-income neighborhood community gardens, and we help to connect them with resources as needed.

Communal Gardens:

This is a unique model where volunteers spend time working in the garden for the betterment of the whole garden and are then able to take home a share of the produce. There is usually more work for one lead person, which comes with more autonomy, and this model is designed for gardeners who don't want as much involvement in the decision-making process but just want to work and take home produce. There is no formal rental style procedures, no plots assigned for individual or family use.

Resource Distribution by Classification

Here are the kinds of resources generally offered through Marion Polk Food Share's Garden Network, and how we distribute those resources throughout the gardens.

Items such as plant starts or seeds are first offered to our priority 1 core gardens in order to have the most impact on the needs in our communities, but we often are able to offer all of these resources to both priority 1 and 2 gardens. More specific information can be found on resources in chapter four.

Items	Notes
Seeds	Priority 1 notification first
Plants	Priority 1 notification first
Donated Supplies	Priority 1 notification first
Printed/online resources	
Annual training invitation	
Quarterly meetings invitation	
Donated Compost	Priority 1 first
Signage	Priority 1 large, Priority 2 small
Purchased Compost/Soil	See mini grant application
Purchased tools	See mini grant application
Construction projects	See mini grant application
Coordinator Support	
Volunteer groups	
Fiscal sponsorship	See mini grant application
Coordinator Recruitment	



Community Garden Leadership Responsibilities

As a coordinator for any kind of garden in our network, you have many different responsibilities. It is important to be aware of the full scope of responsibilities in this position, and find ways to strengthen skills that may not come easily to you. Many gardens also co-coordinate, which gives a coordinator team the ability to delegate and share responsibilities according to skillsets and interests.

General Garden Coordination Responsibilities

Administrative	Community Building	Garden Management
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardener Agreements • Land use/water use agreements • Contracts with the Food Share • Garden rules • Create welcoming environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit volunteers • Host events • Be an ambassador of the garden to community • Recruit gardeners • Work with community organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delegate tasks to manage plots, cleanliness, water use, etc. • Tool check-outs • Meetings with gardeners • Address garden conflicts • Share gardening resources

What makes a successful Garden Coordinator?

People Skills

Understand group dynamics and strong communication

Organizational Skills

Ability to anticipate problems before they arise

Attention to Detail

Keep track of administrative duties and garden responsibilities

Ability to personalize garden to community

Time Investment

Be available to spend time in the garden to be familiar with garden's needs and gardeners

Garden Mission, Vision, and Goals

Creating a garden mission, vision, and/or goals helps gardeners and the community understand the purpose and role of the garden. Having this foundation also helps with gardener retention and communication, resource sourcing from the community, and developing a shared leadership structure with gardeners. It is helpful to gather input from your gardeners to develop these concepts in order to get people dedicated to the larger picture and thus more willing to invest their time and energy. Of course, each garden in our network may have a different purpose, but you should determine the overarching mission of your garden and share that with gardeners.

Mission:

A garden's mission consists of what the garden sets out to do in the short term. It can be simple, but allows gardeners to recognize the purpose behind their work.

Example of Garden Mission:

The Community Garden mission is to provide a safe, positive, and healthy space for the surrounding neighbors to grow food for themselves and their families.

Vision:

Aside from a mission, a vision helps gardeners know what the main focus is for the garden in the long-term. Often gardens will display this vision in a common area of the garden. This vision can become a source of pride for your gardeners, and develop part of a long-term history of your garden space.

Example of Garden Vision:

The vision of this garden is to grow good, healthy food so that our families, our neighbors, and our community can become more sustainable and contribute to the health and wellness of all.

Goals:

It is helpful to not only have a mission, but also individual garden goals that your gardening community can work towards each year, and throughout the seasons. These are usually very attainable, measurable outcomes of your community coming together and growing food. Knowing your garden's goals helps keep you on track toward a successful growing season.

Examples of Garden Goals:

- Grow a greater sense of community
- Build more raised beds
- Feed the community
- Donate to the local food pantry
- Improve communication with gardeners and the public
- Improve garden education



John Knox Community Garden



John Knox Community Garden began in 2009, and is located at John Knox Presbyterian Church in Keizer. The garden is a collaborative community effort with major support from John Knox Presbyterian Church, providing the land, tools, and water required to garden. This garden offers both in-ground plots and raised bed garden spaces to anyone in the community, and as raised beds become available, participants in an educational gardening class called Seed to Supper, have first call. These participants are then able to put their new gardening skills to use and grow food for themselves and their community.

One unique aspect of this garden is the introduction of a “nibbling garden” in 2011; this is a section at the front of the garden available for anyone to stop by and enjoy fresh strawberries, beans, tomatoes, and anything else available.

Part of the success of this garden comes with the initial development and purpose behind the work. See their mission statement below, a great example of creating a strong foundation for your garden.

SPOTLIGHT: Garden Mission and Goals

John Knox has a very clear and direct mission statement; their gardeners are well aware of the purpose of the garden, and they also include this language on their website so the community understands what the garden and its participants stand for.

John Knox Community Garden Mission Statement

Established in 2009 by John Knox Presbyterian Church as a community outreach to: 1) nurture the growth of food for our gardeners, neighbors & community; 2) build & strengthen community through gardening; 3) encourage gardening education & 4) promote earth friendly practices & sustainability.

Helpful Documents: Website Resources


There are a lot of resources available on the Food Share's website that are available for both gardeners and garden coordinators. Specifically, on the Garden Coordinator Resources page, you can find many resources on how to maintain a garden including our annual Community Garden Contracts, and even our blank Mini-Grant Application.

Garden Coordinator Resources

Community Garden Coordinators are incredible volunteers who help gardens grow. This page includes resources to help you start, administer, and grow your community garden. Thank you for all that you do!

Managing a Community Garden

- [Community Garden Best Practices](#) – A new resource we are currently developing. Available summer 2018.
- [Sample Gardener Contracts](#) – Every garden renting plots to the public should have a clear contract in place that outlines the rules and responsibilities that apply to each gardener. This is our suggested template that network gardens can add or subtract from as suits their individual situation.
- [Core Garden Agreement](#)
- [Supported Garden Agreement](#)
- [Food Share resource availability](#) – Garden categories and their resource availability from the Marion-Polk Food Share.
- [Mini Grant Application](#)
- [Gardener Survey – English](#)
- [Gardener Survey – Spanish](#)



There is also a long list of resources specific to gardeners on our website. Have you ever had someone ask you how to compost? Or, how to amend their soil? We have put together a list of helpful gardening resources, many of which come from OSU Extension and other local entities. This is a great place to point your gardeners who have questions, and a useful tool for you to peruse as well.

Gardening Resources

[Find A Garden >](#)

All the Info You Need to Make Your Garden Grow

From our partners at OSU Extension Service:

- [Vegetable Gardening](#)
- [Planting Calendar – English](#)
- [Planting Calendar – Spanish](#)
- [Grow Your Own](#)
- [Short Season Vegetable Gardening](#)
- [Vegetable Gardening in Oregon](#)
- [Fall and Winter Vegetable Gardening in the Pacific Northwest](#)

Gardening Beds and Infrastructure

- [Raised Bed Gardening](#)
- [Trellising Tomatoes](#)
- [Vertical Gardening](#)
- [Container Gardening](#)

Helpful Documents: Gardener Contracts

One of the most valuable resources you can find on the Food Share's website is a sample of gardener contracts. These are not a requirement, but suggested as a way to help outline the rules and responsibilities that apply to each gardener. Feel free to tailor this document to your garden in a way that fits your particular community. For instance, you may not charge for plots, or you may have other guidelines that your property requires. You should also gather gardener contact information at the time of the agreement so that you have a way to connect with all participants. Remember, contracts are helpful in outlining the garden expectations, but ongoing reminders and signage in gardens also help alleviate challenges before they arise.

Community Garden Plot Rental Agreement (Example)

Congratulations on becoming a member of _____ Community Garden, located at _____
Your garden coordinator is _____
Coordinator Phone: _____ Coordinator Email: _____

Guidelines for garden use:

- A plot costs \$____ for the season. Payment is due with this agreement. This money is used for garden supplies that benefit all gardeners.
- We encourage you to donate extra food to your local food bank. A drop box for donated food will be placed in the garden near _____.
- Gardeners agree to regularly maintain your garden from May 15th through September 30th, 2017. You may garden beyond Sept. 30 with permission from your garden coordinator.
- Gardeners may not leave out piles of weeds, dead plants, tools or other supplies when not in use. Please clean up after yourself.
- Each gardener is responsible for helping to maintain clear pathways around their garden plot.
- Gardeners must clean out their beds and bring personal supplies home by October 31st, unless you have requested permission to extend your plot rental through the winter.
- Abandoned plots will be assigned to new gardeners if plots are inactive for 2 weeks and we cannot reach you via phone or email.
- Partners and coordinators are not liable for loss or damage of property or personal injury of community gardeners while participating in gardening activities.
- Use of firearms, animal traps, toxic chemicals and drugs or alcohol is prohibited at the community garden. Burning of debris and dumping garbage is also prohibited. Composting is allowed and encouraged. Please talk to the coordinator for guidelines on using the compost bins.
- If you fail to comply with any of these guidelines you may be prohibited from participating in the community garden in future years. In cases of severe non-compliance, plot rentals may be rescinded by the coordinator.

Equipment & Resources Provided:

- Water is available for your use at the community garden. Please use water wisely.
- Marion-Polk Food Share provides compost, seeds, plant starts, and other supplies as available. See Garden Coordinator for more information.
- The community garden has tools available for gardeners. Please return tools to shed when finished.

Name: _____ Plot Number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Gardener Recruitment and Orientation

At the beginning of each new season, Garden Coordinators must be active in recruiting and gathering gardeners to make sure that the garden is put to good use. Often, once a garden is established, you find that gardeners return year-to-year, and it is just a matter of contacting those gardeners to confirm their commitment.

At the beginning of each season (preferably sometime between January and March), you should reach out to gardeners (new or returning) and ensure they are on board by asking them to sign a gardener agreement (example provided on page 15). You can tailor this document to meet the needs of your own garden, but it is a good guide in knowing what expectations you should have of your gardeners, and important information to communicate at the beginning of each new season.

While gathering agreements, you should consider assigning plots to gardeners, and gathering important contact information in order to be able to connect throughout the season. Of course, if you do not rent the plots in your garden, you may not need to assign plots, but having contact information for gardeners is important.

If you need to recruit new gardeners to your space, you should reach out early in the season, and prominently display your contact information in the garden.

Tips for Recruitment:

- Post a sign in the garden noting that you have plots available
- Provide contact information on all recruitment documents
- Place fliers around the surrounding neighborhood
- Approach local schools, churches, community groups, and entities that might see interested neighbors and families

Once you have a set group of gardeners, it is helpful to have a kickoff event or meeting to gather them all in one place. During this meeting, you can set the ground rules, share your gardener contracts, answer any questions, and help establish a positive attitude and connectivity in your garden from the very beginning.

Tips for a Kickoff Party:

- Include food, or even a potluck
- Have your gardeners sign their rental agreements
- Show gardeners where specific tools, items, and resources are located
- Explain the values and mission of your garden space
- Brainstorm what to grow, or communal rental plot plans
- Brainstorm ideas for new projects and initiatives

Gardening Upkeep

A large part of community gardening is the ongoing upkeep of the garden space. When a community garden is first established, it is easy to think that the pristine pathways and freshly built beds will last a lifetime, but the truth is that gardens take a lot of work to keep looking clean and looking nice.

When acting as the Garden Coordinator, you should be aware of the needs throughout the garden season. Not only are there administrative responsibilities, but there are hands-on tasks that require time and energy. You should find ways to incorporate these tasks into your larger gardening community and gain collective energy and effort toward making sure these things happen. This does not mean that these tasks are your sole responsibility, but that you should consider how to gather support from gardeners and volunteer groups throughout the year.

Depending on your garden's space and methods, you may have differing needs and tasks, but consider the following as typical community garden seasonal needs. Take note, that weeding occurs in every season in a community garden; this is a constant that should be attended to by all gardeners.

SPRING	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weed• Till soil• Add compost and amendments• Start seedlings• Gather plant starts
SUMMER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weed• Pull crops that have been harvested• Build infrastructure (trellis, benches)
FALL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weed• Put gardens to bed (cover crop or cardboard, weed mat)
WINTER	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weed• Till soil• Prune berries• Prune trees/bushes• Crop plan• Gather seeds• Repair beds/ build new beds



Chapter Two:

Inviting Community Into the Garden

- Partnerships
 - *Spotlight: Highland Village Community Garden*
- Community Outreach
 - *Spotlight: Mt. Angel Community Garden*
- Volunteer Groups
 - *Spotlight: Prince of Peace Community Garden*
- Running a Volunteer Work Party
- Giving Back: Donating Food to Pantries
 - *Spotlight: Ellen Lane Community Garden*
- Procedures for Donating
- Youth in the Garden
 - *Spotlight: Polk Co. CSC Youth & Community Garden*
- Events in the Garden
 - *Spotlight: Northgate Forgiveness & Peace Community Garden*



Partnerships

Community partnerships can help cultivate the longevity of a community garden and help build connections in your space. Regardless if your garden is open to the public for plot rental or not, having the mission of your garden available and partnering with like-minded organizations is a great way to make sure the garden becomes part of the larger community.

What does a partnership look like?

Often, entities are interested in being a part of the garden in ways of support which may include:

- Financial support
- Volunteer participation
- Educational programming
- Land use
- Supply sharing and resource procurement
- Advertising, promotion, or social media awareness

Getting the word out and actively cultivating community interest can help expand the love of gardening to people who may not have had that outreach before.

To seek out a positive partnership, you should reach out to nearby businesses, organizations, or programs that share your same values and interests. Be ready to chat about your mission and goals as a community garden, and prepare a list of needs of your garden so that you can help connect their skills and offerings with voids in your work.

Also, be willing to offer something to the partnership; what can you and your gardeners do for the work of the business or organization? Can you offer signage? Advertising? An audience of gardeners?

Potential Partnership Opportunities:

- Neighborhood Associations (check your city's website to find one for your area)
- Different community centers such as churches, shelters (Salvation Army/UGM), and food pantries
- Salem Leadership Foundations, volunteer organizations, neighborhood groups
- Boys & Girls Clubs or Youth Programs—can host work parties and include youth programming
- Community Supported Outreach Coordinators at your local school district
- Colleges and college groups around Salem: Willamette University, Corban University, Chemeketa Community College, and Western Oregon University

Highland Village Community Garden



Highland Village Garden was re-opened in 2018 with the dedicated help of community members, the Food Share, and Salem Leadership Foundation. This garden flourished for some time, went fallow, and came back with neighborly engagement and organizational support. This is one of Marion-Polk Food Share's few gardens that is owned by a private landowner who dedicates the land to be used for this specific purpose in the neighborhood.

For many weeks in 2018, volunteers put in hours of hard work tilling the ground to remove weeds, building a fence, hauling wood chips, moving soil, and building beds. Now with 25 brand new raised garden beds, many in the neighborhood will be able to grow food for themselves and their families. The garden plans to eventually incorporate a shed (partially funded by SLF), a small seating area, and a community herb plot for all to grow and harvest from.

SPOTLIGHT: Community Partnerships

Highland Village Garden is supported by Salem Leadership Foundation, a proponent of the Food Share and its many community gardens. SLF's Lightning Rods facilitate connections and relationships and have helped reboot the Highland Village Garden. Specifically in Highland Village, SLF decided to have one of their Lightning Rods be a co-coordinator of the garden.

This is a partnership that helps create connections with a wider community base, can bring in more volunteers, can help spread the word on social media, and can help procure resources (like the shed that was purchased with help of SLF and the Pop Garden Fund).

Community Outreach

It's good to be able to not only partner with local groups and organizations, but to also actively engage in outreach that spreads the word about your gardening initiatives and gains you access to helpful resources that your community may have to offer.

Be creative when thinking about how community groups might be able to assist you. Does a local farm have too many plant starts? Does a community bank want to engage in a volunteer activity? Does a school group want an educational place to take youth for an agricultural lesson?

The Food Share does have many connections with local businesses and organizations, but we encourage you to do your own outreach as long as we are aware of who you are reaching out to.

It is important that you check in with the Food Share staff first before reaching out to local organizations, so that we do not overburden the same community partners with asks for supplies, support, or volunteer help.

When reaching out to outside groups, it is useful to have talking points ready. Consider a stump speech as a way to engage in conversation with an interested group or individual.

Stump Speech for Community Outreach

A stump speech is ideally a short, informative, and engaging talk that you can give to anyone interested in your garden project. It should have three basic parts:

1. How the garden got started in the community
2. How it's serving the community members
3. How a potential partnership can help the garden

It is important to be able to explain how your garden got started and the history behind your garden space. Explaining how a potential partnership would benefit the garden gets into a specific ask that opens the conversation with the partner so that you both can see ways to continue the good work of gardening.

It is important to know that even if the ask isn't met right then, it is a conversation that people will remember about the garden and might refer back to when resources are more readily available.



Mt. Angel Community Garden



Mt. Angel Community Garden began in 2016, when a young man from the community decided to dedicate his senior project to creating a garden space. With the help of the Benedictine Sisters, Danny designated a space on the grounds of Catholic Community Services and St. Joseph's Shelter property, fenced the area, and began planning raised beds for future gardening activity.

Since then, the garden has flourished into a large space that includes both private community plots, an on-site greenhouse to grow starts, and an in-ground field that is planted and cared for by all gardeners and all harvests from that plot are donated directly to the Mission Benedict Food Pantry.

In the future, the community plans to build a hoop house, an orchard, small vineyard space, and more raised beds for community growing. One of the major goals of this garden is to help unite the community by bringing everyone together for one common goal: to thrive by growing food for all.

SPOTLIGHT: Community Outreach

This garden has been largely successful because of the backing of so many community entities including (but not limited to) Abiqua Landscaping, Columbia Bank, Portland Nursery, Knights of Columbus, Benedictine Sisters, and even local farmers. By reaching out to neighboring businesses, farms, and volunteers, it has become a true hub for everyone in the Mt. Angel and surrounding area. Laura Scarbro, one of the Garden Coordinators, says that in order to gather community support, you must reach out: "people don't know what you need unless you tell them." She suggests being brave, and being willing to share the impact of your project. Not once, has she been turned down when asking for support.

Volunteer Groups

If you have ever gardened on a medium to large scale, you know how important groups of volunteers can be to your success! Be always mindful of groups that you can reach out to get support, especially for large tasks like weeding beds, spreading chips, or hauling compost.

The Food Share can help you find groups of volunteers!

It is always a good idea to check in with Food Share staff to let them know of any big projects happening, a timeline of those projects, and resources needed so they know to keep an eye out for potential volunteer groups. For scheduled garden maintenance such as composting or mulching, you can let the Food Share know in advance, and we can help connect you with interested volunteer groups.

You can always also do outreach for volunteers on your own to groups including schools, colleges, community organizations, businesses, etc. But, again, it's a good idea to check in with the Food Share before approaching partners to make sure we haven't already approached them and have existing volunteer connections with them.



Once you find a group or individual volunteers, be sure to host volunteers in an organized way in order to provide them with a positive experience. You should have tasks ready ahead of time and be prepared to direct volunteers to the needs of your garden. When volunteers have a good experience, they are much more likely to participate again. You may even consider providing water and snacks.

Keep volunteers motivated by sharing the mission and goals of your garden; this helps them understand the importance and value of sometimes very challenging work.

Have volunteers work in large groups to encourage group camaraderie, and participate yourself if you are able.

Always be thankful for your volunteers' efforts, and make it known that you appreciate their time and energy in order to help fulfill the goals of your community garden.

Prince of Peace Community Garden



Prince of Peace Community Garden is a project started by Prince of Peace Church and volunteers in 2016. The church owns the property where the garden is located, and plans to eventually incorporate the garden into a larger additional church campus and community center.

The goal of Prince of Peace Church and the garden is to serve the community, and so they offer the existing 15 plots to community and church members alike. Located in an area with many apartment complexes (and more being built every year), they are able to reach out to neighbors who can easily walk to the garden to participate. Avid gardeners in this space grow lots of tomatoes, corn, tomatillos, peppers, and more.

On vacant land, this garden often struggles with the encroaching quack grass from the nearby field, and often seeks assistance from groups who have a desire to put some muscle into a worthy project.



SPOTLIGHT: Hosting Volunteers

Growing a community garden takes a lot of maintenance, and to get the job done, you must involve community. Prince of Peace Community Garden partners with community groups, and seeks volunteers through Marion-Polk Food Share to help get all of the heavy lifting done.

With lists of tasks (and even extras for when groups are ambitious), the coordinator hosts the group, helps them identify needs, and even often provides lunch! Always thankful, the coordinator frequently lets the volunteers know the impact that they are making within the community. Being a good host is the most important part about running a successful garden work day.

Running a Volunteer Work Party

Preparing for a Volunteer Work Party: (before your event)

- **TASKS:** make a list of potential tasks people can do, put the priority tasks in the top two or three. But make a list longer because volunteers can definitely do a lot more than you think and it's better to be prepared about ideas for what people can work on rather than have them sitting around with nothing to do or leave early.
- **TOOLS:** gather all the necessary tools the day before. You can borrow tools from the network's garden shed, but you need to speak with Staff to schedule your tool pick-up/drop-off in advance.
- **LOGISTICS:** communicate contact information for the lead person in the volunteer group, time expected to arrive, and who will be the person staying to host the work party.
- **ORGANIZE:** layout tools, agendas, and tasks beforehand to utilize your time wisely.
- **GROUP NEEES:** determine what your specific group needs and prepare ahead of time: water, snacks, gloves?

Running a Work Party: (during your event)

- **GREET:** greet all volunteers, let them know where to park, and have them all gather in one place.
- **INTRODUCTION:** give them an introduction to the garden, to you, and to the importance of the work they're going to do today (see below: Work Party Speech).
- **GROUPS:** split into teams/groups if necessary.
- **DEMONSTRATE:** show how to do tasks. Especially show people what to weed, how to lay down compost, and how thick to spread it out, where to put mulching down, etc.
- **PARTICIPATE:** monitor and participate in tasks.
- **BREAKS:** take breaks based on feedback and how long the group is there for. Communicate your plans for taking breaks to the entire group.
- **REFLECT:** end 15-20 minutes before the group is scheduled to leave to clean up, put tools back, and reflect on what they've accomplished.

Work Party Speech: (at the beginning of your event)

- Introduce who you are, what your role is in the garden, and the garden's history.
- What are the benefits of community gardens, how the garden has benefited your area/ community.
- Why the work they are going to do today is beneficial to the bigger picture of community gardens and how the gardens support the mission of ending hunger in our communities.
- End your introduction speech by describing the tasks for the day.

Follow Up: (after your event)

- **THANK:** send a thank you to the group, or share photos on social media.



Giving Back: Donating to Food Pantries

When you find your garden in the thick of production season, you may find that you have an overabundance of produce that just can't be utilized fast enough. A good option is to find a way to donate this to a food pantry or local group that can use it quickly. If you see that gardeners frequently neglect harvesting produce in their plots, you might want to even include a clause in your gardener agreement that states that ripening produce will be picked and donated if not collected in a timely manner.

Aside from the overabundant crops in personal garden plots, many gardens design a plot or section of the garden designated to grow for donations only, which is a great way to support food security in your community. If you aren't already connected with a food pantry or meal site in your area, you can contact the Agency Relations Department at the Food Share or find a pantry through our website at marionpolkfoodshare.com/emergency-food.

It is important to note that there is a difference between food pantries and meal sites. When donating to *food pantries*, you can take a harvest directly to the site for food distribution without worrying about what or how much you are donating. Produce can be simply put out for pantry guests to take. The Food Share can even provide containers for harvest and/or distribution.

When donating to a *meal site* however, there is a little more preparation involved. Meal sites often use donations to incorporate into a planned meal, and so need a much larger donation. If you would like to grow for donation to a meal site, you should communicate with a meal site coordinator to determine what kind of crop to grow and how much quantity is necessary to make a meal with that donation, or if they are willing to take smaller donations.

All fresh, locally grown produce is valuable to donation sites, but often we find some items are more popular than others. Also, it is important to recognize the quality of the produce you are donating. Some produce can be viewed as less desirable, especially if individuals do not know what to do with the produce. For example: large, overgrown squash, is often neglected because folks don't know how to use it.

If you are growing specifically for donating produce, this list can give you an idea of some of the most popular items.

Staple Crops:	Specialty Crops:
Greens	Basil
Tomatoes	Cilantro
Onions	Oregano
Potatoes	Small Squash
Tomatillos	Eggplant
Peppers	Scallions
Beans	Cherry Tomatoes
Apples	
Berries	



Ellen Lane Community Garden



Ellen Lane Community Garden was established in 2014, and resides in the Chandler Estates Subdivision in a West Salem Park. The garden boasts over 100 raised beds, all equipped with their own watering spigot, drip line irrigation, and a foundation of chicken wire under each raised bed to prevent pests.

The Ellen Lane Community Garden leadership has been instrumental in fundraising for their space, and even ask that members contribute by donating bottles and cans to help support the garden's efforts.

SPOTLIGHT: Donating Produce and Growing for Donation

Ellen Lane Community Garden specifically sets aside multiple donation beds that are grown by the entire group, but are harvested solely for donating to local pantries, and many of the gardeners there commit to donating a portion of their own harvests to pantries as well.

3-4 times per week, during the harvest season, garden coordinators and volunteers pick, clean, wash, and pack produce for delivery to one (or all) of four local pantries. Volunteers have specific days when they are scheduled to help harvest and deliver. Their goal is to get produce from the garden to the table of someone who needs it in just one day.

The garden has also created a storage system for gardeners who suddenly realize they have too much produce to use in their own garden plots; they have bins set aside that anyone can contribute to, and the coordinators ensure delivery of that produce to a pantry that will use it. In 2016, the garden donated over one whole TON of produce, and in 2017, Ellen Lane Community garden increased that to over TWO TONS! Having a system in place and volunteers willing to support helps donations go a long way.



Procedures for Donating

These are best practices for donating produce to food pantries to ensure that your donation can be best utilized.

Clean Your Produce:

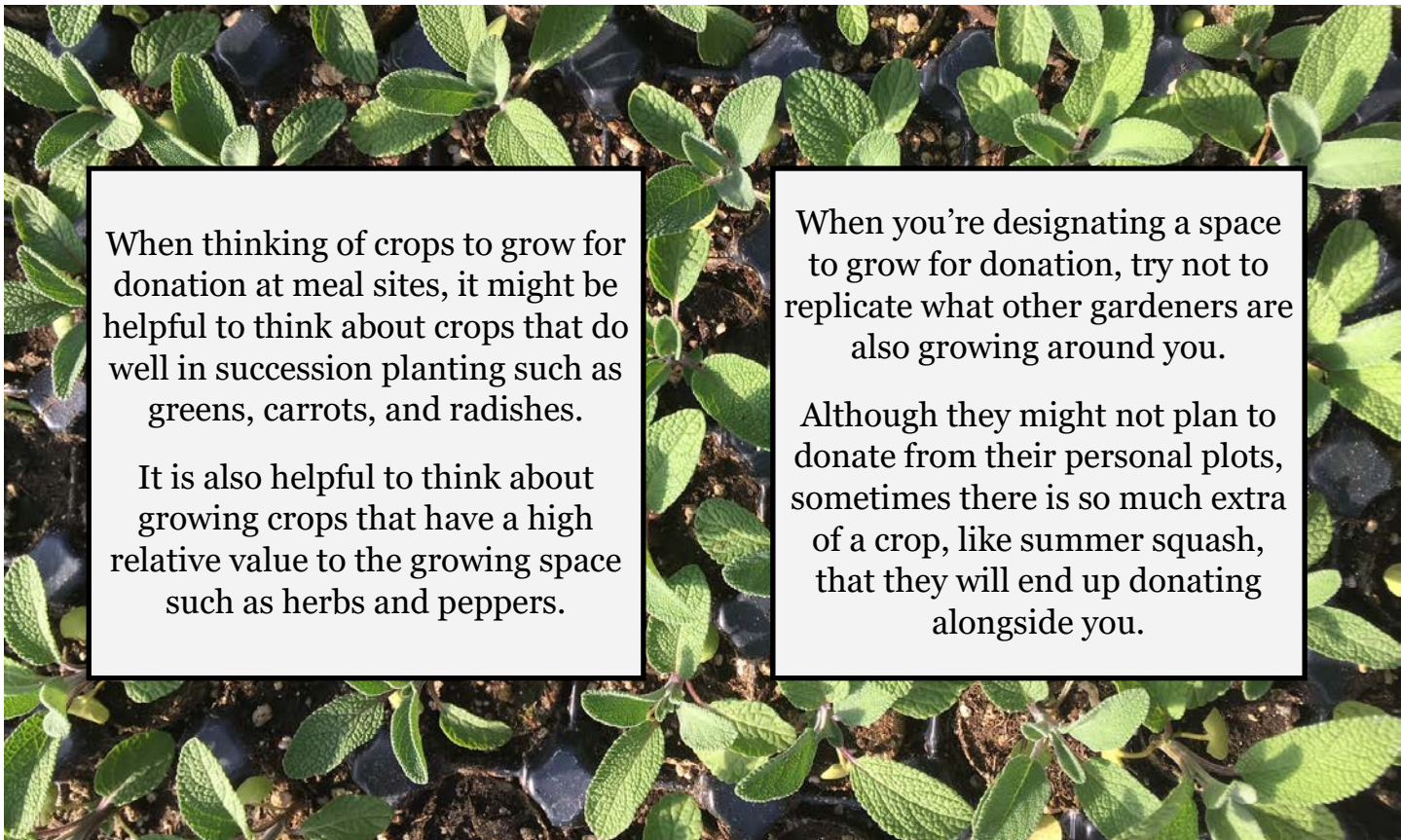
It is not required to wash the produce before you donate it. However, appearance does matter. When people are looking at produce to take at grocery stores, they do tend to take things that look cleaner, have less bruises on them, and don't have debris on them. When harvesting, try to rub some of the dirt off the produce or even wash it before donating.

When harvesting and storing, try to handle produce gently to avoid bruising. Before donating, try to take off excess plant matter such as vines, roots, or flowers that are rotting on the produce.

Weigh Your Produce:

It is a best practice to weigh how much produce from your garden you donate. You don't need to weigh each individual item but when you're going to drop off your produce, it is helpful to weigh everything and record it in your garden records. Most pantry sites through Marion-Polk Food Share have access to large scales for weighing donations.

You can also bring your produce to the Food Share and weigh it all at once instead of doing it at your garden. This means you can also donate your produce to the Food Share and place it in the cooler instead of taking it directly to a food pantry. Both ways work well, it just depends on your preference.



When thinking of crops to grow for donation at meal sites, it might be helpful to think about crops that do well in succession planting such as greens, carrots, and radishes.

It is also helpful to think about growing crops that have a high relative value to the growing space such as herbs and peppers.

When you're designating a space to grow for donation, try not to replicate what other gardeners are also growing around you.

Although they might not plan to donate from their personal plots, sometimes there is so much extra of a crop, like summer squash, that they will end up donating alongside you.

Youth in the Garden

One of the most valuable and exciting things you can do in the garden is share the experience with youth. You may have families that are gardening together, and it is important to recognize the importance of involving youth in such a life-long skill of caring for and sustaining a garden.

Although at first it may seem like a challenge to keep young feet out of garden beds or from picking that not-quite-ripe-strawberry, it is useful to think of their time in the garden as an educational experience and help to provide moments for learning.

Some gardens even incorporate a youth plot or space for all youth involved to take ownership of. This often is simple crops that provide a large harvest, or a “grazing” harvest, so that youth can expect something to pick each time they visit the garden.

You may also consider partnering with local youth organizations or schools in order to offer an opportunity for youth to get their hands dirty and recognize the hard work that it takes to grow food.

Try to remember that although you may have ample experience in the garden, many young people are amazed to learn that potatoes grow under ground, or that bees and bugs are good for pollination of our vegetable crops. Sharing these things with young people helps grow our community’s understanding of food systems.

If you do choose to engage youth directly in the garden, consider these tips:

- Provide safe, youth-friendly tools
- Be clear, and positive about expectations (for instance: what weeds to pull)
- Ask questions, and let them ask questions of you
- Consider safety, and parental consent
- Photo consent from guardians
- Be prepared when talking to youth to discuss common interesting topics like bugs, soil, watering, and vegetables



Polk Co. CSC Youth & Community Garden



Polk Co. Community Services Consortium Youth & Community Garden was started in 2018 as a partnership between many entities, including: the City of Independence, Community Services Consortium in Polk County, Salem Health West Valley, and Marion-Polk Food Share.

When the garden is complete, there will be 24 donated raised beds that are designed to be ADA accessible. The garden is in a prime location near a school, the YMCA pool, and a resource center, and will bring the community to the park for many group events. They already have a place to put a greenhouse, and plans to build a chicken coop for the neighborhood.

The garden hopes to not only offer plots to community members, but also education about garden planning, greenhouse management, sustainable landscaping, and more.

SPOTLIGHT: Involving Youth in the Garden

Not only does this garden offer plots to community members for rental, but it was started and sustained by youth in the Community Services Consortium's youth programs. These youth gain work-skills and training that help prepare them for a future career. Skills include organizing, building, communication, and development. This is one way to truly involve youth in a structured, and beneficial way, while providing incredible resources to the community members who grow in this plot. Nichole Rose, of CSC, believes that "the process of gardening goes hand in hand with learning positive life skills and actively threading resilience in the community as well as stewardship to the environment, the community and to their own health and well being." The youth program supports the community, while essentially allowing youth the opportunity to grow. As Rose puts it "my hope is that the youth crew learns, not only to physically garden, but to nurture the metaphorical garden within their own lives."

Events in the Garden

The garden is a wonderful space to invite community for all kinds of events. Use events as a tool to recruit gardeners, support, and interest in your garden space, while also encouraging your gardeners to keep their plots looking beautiful.

Tips for Planning an Event:

- Clearly, garden events should be held at a time that is conducive to Oregon weather, and always have a backup plan.
- If you plan an event in your garden space, it is useful to advertise in many locations depending on your scope, including directly in the garden.
- Plan to either attend and be available throughout the entire event, or have volunteers assigned to make sure that there is always a representative of the garden available.
- Consider including materials about your garden and plot rental to those who may be encountering your garden for the first time.

Kinds of Events to Consider Hosting:

- Spring kickoff parties
- Work parties
- BBQ or potlucks
- Neighborhood party
- Harvest party/harvest exchange
- Educational classes



Keep in mind that if you are hoping to host an event, Food Share staff can support you with resources or time if it fits within our mission. For example, if your gardeners continue to ask you about starting a worm bin to help with compost and you really don't know where to start, we can connect you with community members who may be experts and can set up a class with your gardeners in your space.

Some Things to Consider:

If you have a garden space that is primarily garden plots, it may be difficult to host many people. Consider safety, cleanliness, and avoid tools that may create tripping hazards, etc. You should also notify the land owners if you are planning to host an event to ensure available parking, resources, and permissions.

Northgate Forgiveness & Peace Community Garden



Northgate Forgiveness & Peace Garden is a garden with a very special purpose. This garden serves as an incredible community space, and a bright corner of Northgate Park in honor of Montez Bailey who died at the park in 2009 as a result of gang violence.

In 2010, after the community suffered the loss of Bailey, many groups and neighbors including Life Direction Church, the Salem Kezier Coalition for Equality, Marion-Polk Food Share, and the Northgate Neighborhood Association, came together to dedicate an unused space in Northgate park for growing flowers in Bailey's memory, and also to create a space of healing, of forgiveness, and of peace for this neighborhood. Eventually, the space expanded to not only grow flowers, but vegetables and community, too.

Now, as a magnet for groups of all ages, the garden hosts many events and brings people together for all kinds of different purposes. The community gathers around perennial flower beds, shady trees, raised garden beds full of vegetables, and can find a calm space to rest on a bench or picnic table. Youth has always been an important aspect of this garden, too, and it includes four raised beds dedicated for youth to plant and grow vegetables that they want to eat and share.

SPOTLIGHT: Events in the Garden

Northgate Forgiveness & Peace Garden is very deeply connected with a community group called Enlace. This is a cross-cultural development group that offers opportunities for all to gather and share culture, good food, and community.

This garden not only brings together its own gardeners and volunteers, but brings the whole community into the garden as a gathering space.

Many events are hosted, with the garden being the site where food is shared, shows are performed, bike rodeos are started, and much, much more. With tarps and blankets, large groups come to enjoy the space and participate in community events. Truly, this garden is a welcoming spot for all.

Chapter Three: Creating Community Within the Garden

- Encouraging Community and Connectivity
 - *Spotlight: Whittam Community Garden*
- Creating a Welcoming Garden Space for All
 - *Spotlight: Redeemer Community Garden*
- Building Garden Leaders
- Handling Garden Theft
- Conflicts and Resolution



Encouraging Community and Connectivity

Establishing Community:

Community gardens are inherently linked with creating community; creating a sense of community in a garden is vital to a gardener having a positive experience, and helps foster the mission of what community gardens do: create spaces for us to garden and grow food together.

Community can mean a lot of things, but we think of community being a place where individuals from every walk of life can come together and feel welcomed and involved in the garden space.

As the garden coordinator, you are a leader in the garden and your actions help develop a foundation for community in your garden. Keep in mind that how you interact, invite, and connect with your gardeners and your community sets the tone for your entire garden. Keeping gardeners connected and feeling welcome, and offering ways for them to do that, is essential to the health of your garden program.

Sustaining Community:

Creating a positive sense of community is not just about the starting of a garden or a gardener experience, it continues through their entire tenure with the garden. In order to keep a positive experience, you must sustain this sense of community over multiple seasons.

Often, we find that once a gardener has gone through a season or two, they become used to the way things run, which often results in a lack of participation or connection to the positive forward energy in the garden. To encourage a continued sense of community and connection between your gardeners, you could:

- Require gardeners to attend at least one event each season
- Hold end of season BBQ events or cook-offs
- Create a social media account for constant communication
- Send out frequent e-mails or information to gardeners
- Hold seed swaps, or knowledge sharing events
- Ask input for needs, support, and ideas for the garden
- Send out a gardener survey to assess the needs and experience of the group
- Seek educational experiences and classes for gardeners (the Food Share can help with this!)



However you choose to encourage community and connectivity, remember that it is an ongoing task and requires effort to keep everyone on the same page and inspired by gardening.

Whittam Community Garden



Whittam Community Garden broke ground in 2010 on the grounds of Mike Whittam Park in NE Keizer. Mike Whittam was a long-time parks employee before he passed in 1987, and Whittam Park was named in his honor. His wife, Kathy Whittam, along with Keizer Parks Foundation, Keizer Mayor Lore Christopher, and a number of other community partners, rallied together to start this garden to give the park a stronger purpose and to bring people together.

Now, the garden boasts over 40 beds that serve not only 25 separate families, but include gardens specifically grown and harvested for donation, and beds dedicated to growing plants for important pollinators. Multiple community groups are involved and participate in growing food for the community; donation beds and extra produce is often delivered to Simonka Place in Keizer, Marion-Polk Food Share, and food banks in the area.

This garden is a beautiful representation of a successful community space, and one of the ways they are able to foster community and keeping connected, is through strong communication.

SPOTLIGHT: Encouraging Connectivity

Whittam Community Garden does an incredible job of keeping their members (and community partners) apprised of any updates, needs, and even recognition for members doing a great job. The Garden Coordinator communicates directly with members not only in the garden, but also via email and a very popular Facebook page.

Frequent posts on social media engage members, help them feel a part of a community, help uphold integrity in the garden, and show that they are a part of a caring group of gardeners. Whittam garden also uses social media to recognize individuals and businesses who show support of the garden.

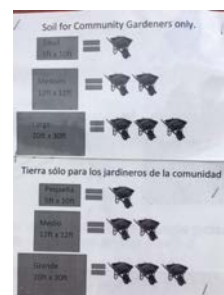


Creating a Welcoming Gardening Space for All

Just having a garden that is available for plot rental, or that is part of a community organization is not enough to ensure that it is welcoming for all. You should consider how outsiders view your garden, and how you can help make it a comfortable place for all kinds of gardeners to frequent and enjoy. Community gardens are, by name, a place for the whole community to come together and connect.

Here are a few ideas for creating a welcoming space:

- **Contact Info:** Include contact information and a garden name on a sign. This helps identify who is running the garden, and how someone can get involved.
- **Varied Advertising:** Consider creating community by advertising your garden plots in multiple locations, and in multiple *kinds* of locations. For instance, not just community centers, but maybe churches, schools, community programs, shelters, and/or local shopping centers. Try to be as varied as possible, in order to reach the bulk of your community.
- **Multiple Languages:** Try also to provide advertising (and general garden communications) in languages that pertain to your particular gardeners and your surrounding community. This helps build a sense of connection and understanding in your garden space.
- **Signage:** Inside your garden, post signs in multiple languages, and be willing to offer your gardening documents in multiple languages that may apply to your gardeners (you can reach out to MFPS about translation services if needed). You may also want to consider using images on signage to help break down the barriers to communication among multiple communities and age groups.
- **Gather Gardeners:** Start your season with a Kickoff party. This helps gardeners get to know one another.
- **Work Parties:** Plan work parties. This helps everyone feel a part of the large work in the garden and feel supported by one another.



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Creating a Welcoming Gardening Space for All

- Shared Gardens: Offer shared garden space like an herb garden or large plot. For something like corn or summer squash, many gardeners do not want to use up valuable space in their plots, so include them in a community plot that all take care of and all can harvest.
- Communication Boards. You can incorporate a message board (chalk board, white board, bulletin board) so that members can communicate with one another and you can keep them updated with useful information.
- Group Seating (a picnic table, benches). Having some kind of resting place creates a sense of comfort, as well as relaxation in a place of community. This also brings people together to celebrate, share meals, and feel like they are a part of the larger garden space.
- Social Media. Having a social media page where everyone posts can help members feel included and a part of a community space. We suggest making a general page that can be passed on to others from year to year.
- Shared Photos. Whether it is on social media, or some kind of bulletin board, sharing photos of your gardeners and the goings on in the garden are important to make everyone feel included (and valued) in the garden. Be sure to include photos of all gardeners available, and ask first before posting!



Lastly, it is important to recognize that gardening is such a personal and cultural practice and we find that when we come together and garden collectively, we learn so many different ways of cultivating and preparing wonderful food. Consider what you have to learn from one another, and be open to new gardening practices and ideas.

Redeemer Community Garden



Redeemer Community Garden, located on the property of Redeemer Lutheran Church in North Salem, broke ground in 2010. When the land opened up for use, community members, church members, and Marion-Polk Food Share came together to create a community garden space. The garden is a 1/2 acre lot with 31 individual plots, community seating areas, and community growing areas of berries and fruit trees.

Not only does the garden offer plots to grow food for over 19 families, they also host a gardener who grows only flowers so that she can share them with home bound or hospital patients. Three plots are also reserved each year for a rotation of families who have children in the Oregon Child Development Coalition's Head Start Program adjacent to the property.

When this garden was still getting established, some gardeners who were also members of the church, decided to create a "CSA-like" opportunity to share produce. They grew so much produce for church families that they ended up bringing in loads of extras to the congregation. Eventually, because of the excitement and visibility of gardening among one another, members of the congregation began bringing in their own abundance to share, and some even rented plots to grow in the next gardening season.

SPOTLIGHT: Learning from Others

Redeemer Community Garden, among many others in our network, fosters strong community between its gardeners. From encouraging participation by everyone and valuing consistent communication, gardeners learn from one another and acquire new skills in gardening, maintenance, and even culinary adventures.

For an example in the Redeemer Garden, a family grows multiple beds of garlic every year. This long-growing crop begs questions from other gardeners, which provides the opportunity to learn from one another and the unique goals that each gardener has with their space.

Building Garden Leaders

Being the sole leader of a community garden can be a lot of responsibility, and building natural leaders within your community garden can not only alleviate some of that burden, but can also help gather valuable investment and energy from your gardeners.

Some community gardens have co-coordinators, or even a group of coordinators that share the leadership of the garden. This is helpful, especially when considering the skillset, interests, and strengths of individuals who are helping your garden.

Consider delegating specific roles, or tasks, and be willing to recognize when another member may have more energy or knowledge about a topic and allow for that to flourish for the benefit of all of your gardeners.

Suggested Tasks to Distribute and Coordinate:

- Resource procurement
- Contracts and gardener paperwork
- Weeding responsibilities
- Compost
- Communications
- Produce donations
- Perennial and/or group gardening spaces
- Work parties
- Social media posts
- Educational opportunities



Always be open to hearing when a gardener has interest in a specific task, topic, or endeavor. This is often an opportunity to seek their support in spearheading a project or an initiative within the garden. Remember, a community garden is not just your responsibility, it is the responsibility of the entire community to ensure its success. This can also help when later on you may wish to transition coordinator duties to someone else.

All this being said, the Food Share does ask that you do appoint at least one person to be the contact for your garden. This person will be our direct line to communicate about donations, upcoming events, and any needs you have in the garden. We are more than happy to speak to any gardeners, but having one point leader is helpful when it comes to larger decisions or tasks of your specific garden.

Handling Garden Theft

There are many strategies to preventing theft in community garden plots. However, sometimes the unfortunate does happen and damage is caused to the property or to the plants that gardeners spent time cultivating. Being a community space, it is naturally vulnerable to use by all community members.

Typical instances of theft include both outsider theft, as well as the rare (but potential) theft between gardeners. If you can avoid situations that either stem from misunderstanding (a gardener harvesting produce because they think it has been abandoned, an outsider harvesting because they do not understand the purpose of a community garden), your gardeners will feel more secure and grateful to be part of the gardening community.

Prevention Method Ideas:

- Grow an edible landscape around the garden's entrance/property. Put signage up around these areas that says "public consumption welcome."
- Place signage that says "private plots" and have contact information for the garden coordinator available in people have questions or are interested in gardening or getting fresh food access.
- Include a fence to border your garden space. It does not always need to be entirely enclosed or locked either. Often the visual border is enough to deter theft.
- Community outreach is beneficial to let people know about the activities of your garden. You can communicate that you have private rental plots, grow for donation, or serve a specific population. When more people know what the style/purpose of the garden is, the less they will mistake it for all-around public consumption.
- Names and/or numbers on garden beds to express that they are designated for individuals and/or families.



Conflicts and Resolution

Having a diversity of gardeners and gardening styles brings so many positive aspects to a community garden. However, tensions and conflicts can arise, and we can help you through some of the most common challenges.

As the garden coordinator, you may choose how you want to handle conflicts in the garden; to ease clarity, you can detail your policy in the introductory orientation to gardeners or you can let them know on a case by case basis. As always, the Food Share is here to help you through unique gardening challenges, so don't hesitate to reach out for support.

Potential Conflicts in the Garden:

Unruly Garden Plots: Often, in the peak of the season, produce can overgrow a gardener's space. Produce growing into pathways can be an annoyance to other gardeners, and some gardeners could see overgrowing produce as a sign of a gardener not spending enough time on their garden or not placing a high enough value on their crops.

This is something you can prevent by setting expectations in your gardener contract or at a kickoff party, or you can establish an expectation that every garden bed can have its own personality and that other gardeners should not be concerned. Of course, if the overgrowth of the plot is comprised of weeds, you should take steps to mitigate the problem so that weeds do not start to sprout all over the garden space.

Varying Levels of Gardening Experience: Community gardening welcomes all into the world of growing food, and with that comes varying levels of education and experience with gardening. Conflict can arise when a gardener feels that their experience or understanding of gardening is superior to what they see others doing in the garden space.

To prevent this kind of conflict, you can make it clear from the beginning that a community garden is a shared space where all can learn and develop as gardeners. You may want to also consider including the more experienced gardener in some of your decision making, or educational ventures for the entire group. Ultimately, gardeners need to know that there is an expectation of respect and individuality in each person's plot.

Uneven Utilization of Resources: You may encounter gardeners feeling that resources are being used unfairly, or one or two gardeners monopolizing all of the garden's resources.

As community gardens share tools, water, resources, and donations, it is important to set expectations on how to utilize those resources. For example, if you provide free seeds, consider limiting each gardener to a particular number of packets each season.

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Conflicts and Resolution

Lack of Participation in Community Efforts: Especially in a garden's third or fourth year, or when gardeners return year after year, it becomes increasingly difficult to gather support for major work parties and communal efforts like weeding, composting, and general community engagement.

To encourage more participation by all gardeners, consider requiring participation as part of the gardener contract, with the potential of next season participation loss if expectations are not met. Stress the importance of a common goal and regular participation in large projects in a community garden.

Lack of Harvesting: Sometimes with busy schedules, gardeners do not get to their plots in time, or intentionally leave produce in their garden beds. Often others can become confused or frustrated that the gardener is not caring for their crop by harvesting. The challenge with this situation is if another gardener feels that it is their responsibility to then harvest others' crops.

Communication is the key to this challenge, and asking the gardener if they intend to harvest produce or if they would like help in harvesting and/or donating their yields. You can also avoid this situation by including a line in the gardener contract that explains that abandoned plots will be harvested.

When you are handling conflict in the garden, it is helpful to return to the mission of the garden in order to help inform your choices, and also as a reminder to your gardeners as they recognize why they inhabit the space together. This will help you make unbiased decisions that support the overall goals of your community space.

Part of the responsibility of the garden coordinator is to keep the goals in the forefront of each gardener's experience, which can be a challenging position to be in. Again, it is simplest when these expectations are set at the beginning of a growing season. When conflicts arise in the moment, it is useful to utilize active listening and encourage disgruntled gardeners to do so as well.



Tips for Productive and Positive Conversation:

- Give ample time for all parties to express their thoughts/concerns.
- Reiterate the concerns as to show your understanding of the conversation.
- Ensure that your posture and body language match your intent to listen and understand your gardeners.
- Avoid siding with a gardener who you are more familiar with, and instead try to recognize the concerns of all parties.
- Remind gardeners of the goals of the community space, and the general expectations of your particular garden.
- At the end, come up with a conclusion that serves the garden's purpose, shows respect to all parties, and enables the continuation of a healthy and positive gardening experience.

Chapter Four: Resources and Garden Funding

- Garden Network Resources
- Collaborating with the Food Share
- Mini Grant Application Process
- *Spotlight: Sunnyslope Community Garden*
- Finding Garden Materials
- *Spotlight: Rickman Community Garden*
- Fundraising for the Garden



Garden Network Resources

As mentioned before, Marion-Polk Food Share often has access to tools and resources for many different kinds of community garden needs.

Here is an outline of the most general resources, but feel free to ask if we have other resources to fulfill the needs that come up in your garden.

Compost— we often have donated compost that we can deliver early in the season, primarily to core gardens.

Seeds— the Food Share receives large donations of seeds, and seeds are always available to garden coordinators (please, do not send multiple gardeners to pick up) in the Seed Shed just to the side of the entrance at the Food Share building. Ask Food Share staff for the lock code.

Plant Starts— we are committed to connecting with many local growers and gathering plant starts that can no longer be sold. Staff regularly contact and pick up plant starts to distribute among gardens. An e-mail will be sent out to coordinators when these are available, and they can be found under the tree behind the seed shed.

Educational Materials— as the Food Share hosts Seed to Supper classes around the Salem area, we have access to thorough and useful printed materials that have been produced by Oregon Food Bank. We also provide a plethora of resources on our website for all gardeners.

Tool Usage— housed at the Food Share, the Gardens Program does have rototillers, weed-eaters, and multiple kinds of garden tools. Access to these tools is available to all gardens upon a check-out system and signed waiver. Please coordinate with the Garden Program Coordinator to schedule time to check-out tools.

Other Donations as Received— as the Food Share constantly is receiving donations of all sorts at the warehouse, there may be times where we have access to garden tools, fertilizer, plants, or other items that can be useful in a community garden. The Garden Program Coordinator will reach out when these kinds of materials are available and they typically will be disbursed on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Funding— through our Mini-Grant Application process, we do have minimal funding that we can offer to gardens. We reserve the right to determine the best use of those funds, and all applications may or may not be approved for financial disbursement.



Collaborating with the Food Share

The benefit of being a part of the Marion-Polk Food Share Community Garden Network is the general ability to collaborate with our organization and all of the connections we have within our communities. It is always useful to reach out and see if the Food Share has a way to fulfill the needs of your community garden before you do outside research.

Some examples of ways you can collaborate with Marion-Polk Food Share:

Plot Rental Advertising— the Food Share has an interactive map on the website which can direct community members to gardens near them. We provide contact information on our website and in print form so that individuals can connect with you about utilizing and/or helping within your garden. The Food Share can also help with printing materials, gardener contracts, or advertising.

Events— if you plan to have an event at your garden for your gardeners or your surrounding community, the Food Share has access to equipment, tools, tables, etc. that may be of use to you, as well as communication to the rest of the garden community.

Water Use— many community gardens are on public land, and specifically in the City of Salem, the city will donate the use of water to community gardens free of charge. You may want to ask if this is a possibility, or if you could receive some sort of discount for the high use of water in your garden.

Funding Opportunities— many community groups are well aware of the programs and impacts of Marion-Polk Food Share. If you are seeking outside funding, you should connect with the Food Share to help secure those funds. In fact, you should ALWAYS check with Marion-Polk Food Share if you are seeking outside funding to avoid asking an organization who already supports the Food Share in other ways.

Volunteers— The Food Share has staff who are specifically responsible for recruiting and stewarding volunteers. Many volunteers, and specifically, groups, prefer to do manual labor outside, and therefore community garden projects are a good fit. If you are having a hard time finding groups to help with major garden projects, reach out to Food Share staff to recruit volunteer groups.

Educational Opportunities— MFPS has many connections with educators and gardening experts in the area; if you have an idea of an educational opportunity to have in your garden space, reach out to us and see if we can host a workshop or provide educational materials.

These are only some examples of ways we can collaborate, but this list is not comprehensive. We are open to ideas and hearing the needs of your garden that are not listed here.

Mini-Grant Application Process

Marion-Polk Food Share is committed to supporting community gardens and specifically budgets for tools, building projects, and garden needs each year.

In order to fairly distribute those funds to our over 60 community gardens, we developed the Mini-Grant Application process. The application itself can be found on our website, or we can have a hard-copy printed for you.

There are three tiers to the Mini-Grant Funds:

Blueberry Fund: (up to \$100)

- All gardens eligible
- Core can reapply and be accepted for up to \$250/year
- Supported can reapply and be accepted for up to \$150/year
- Submit a Mini-Grant Application

Apple Fund: (between \$100 and \$500)

- Core gardens eligible
- Core gardens may apply multiple times, but will be awarded only one each year
- Submit a Mini-Grant Application and a detailed budget

Watermelon Fund: (between \$500 and \$1000)

- Core gardens eligible
- Core gardens may apply multiple times, but only ONE garden in the network will receive an award per quarter
- Submit a Mini-Grant Application, a detailed budget, and a letter describing the impact of your project

Fund Applications are accepted at any time, either via e-mail or print format. Watermelon Grants are only reviewed quarterly, but Apple and Blueberry funds are typically reviewed immediately and applicants notified within two weeks.

Applications are reviewed by staff, and approved or denied for disbursement dependent on the need for the project, and a rubric of determining the impact of the project. These rubrics can be viewed by request by any garden coordinator.

Sunnyslope Community Garden



When Liberty Road South was expanded in the 1980's, a large strip was left fallow for many years. Sally Cook, local resident and current City Councilor, ran a major personal effort to petition the city, which has since owned the land, to allow her to create a community garden there. With the help of Food Share and the Sunnyslope Neighborhood Association a long process came to fruition and in 2012, Sally and Food Share staff broke ground with an entry gate, eighteen raised beds and a donated shed. The City of Salem has provided water access and has been assisting in grass and weed control.

The garden has added raised beds every year and now has 75 currently planted, plus a blueberry patch, hops, nine apple trees and herb garden and a trellis of twelve grape plants. There are 65 gardeners, and ten beds are community beds that are intended for passers by and the Food Share.



SPOTLIGHT: Mini Grant Recipient

Nothing helps you gain more support for your project than advocating for yourself. Gardeners at Sunnyslope Garden are always on the lookout for potential partners and ways that multiple community entities can become involved in the mission of the garden. Specifically, the garden coordinator pays great attention to opportunities like the Mini-Grant Application, and puts together succinct, detailed applications for real-need projects.

The garden struggled to keep tools safe and equipment useable year-to-year, and they knew it would be important for this garden to have a locking, functional shed. Sunnyslope Community Garden was awarded the first Watermelon Large Grant through the application process at Marion-Polk Food Share. Not only did the garden acquire funds to purchase a shed, but the garden coordinator, Norm, then leveraged his connections with the community to get donated paint and shingles to finish the project.

Finding Garden Materials

When starting out a garden, most people think of all of the expenses that could go along with the project. In reality, there are many ways to garden very effectively, and on a budget.

There are some things you just may have to buy, but finding resources through the Food Share or local businesses can be helpful. You can even try looking on the free section of craigslist, thrift stores, garage sales, or local giveaway groups. We have heard many success stories about using free adds on craigslist for gathering supplies like wood rounds (for stools), a barbecue, and even partnering with a community member to build wooden benches for the garden.

Think creatively about what your needs are in the garden. Clearly, there is no substitute for seeds or good soil, but when it comes to infrastructure, you can re-use many discarded or recyclable items. Keep an open mind, and look around to what you already have for neat and inexpensive projects.

Here are some ideas for DIY projects or ways to cut costs and garden effectively:

- Cardboard for weed barrier
- Milk jugs for greenhouse effect
- Clamshells for mini greenhouses
- Egg cartons for seed trays
- Cut toilet paper rolls for seed trays
- Popsicle sticks for labels
- Painted rocks for plant labels
- String and sticks for trellising
- PVC pipe for trellises or large tubes for strawberry planting
- Old wheels, bed frames, art, for trellises
- Containers of any kind (tic tac containers, pill bottles) for seed saving
- Old kitchen utensils for digging tools



Rickman Community Garden



Rickman Community Garden, located right next to City Hall in Keizer, offers 17 rentable raised beds (including two that are ADA accessible), 3 community growing beds for large plantings like squash, carrots, or corn, and 13 half-barrels surrounding the garden with herbs and group crops for all to share.

This garden began when community member, Tanya Hamilton, wanted to find a place to meet community members who shared the same interests. She worked closely with groups like the City of Keizer, Marion-Polk Food Share, Hands On Mid-Willamette Valley, and Salem Leadership Foundation to reach out to others and spread the word about this opportunity.

In the spring of 2013, Rickman Community Garden opened with a community kickoff including a potluck, gardening activities, and activities for kids. Since, the garden has flourished with bountiful crops, a beautiful pergola and seating area, and a donated greenhouse with plans to convert to solar power in order to heat and grow food later into the season.



SPOTLIGHT: Finding Resources

Rickman Community Garden has always been a very resourceful community. When the group decided that they wanted to have more crops available to the entire garden, they reached out to local wineries to gather supplies for individual herb beds. Wine barrels were donated and made into wonderful decoration around the perimeter of their garden. Also donated, were red-white-and blue flags, stars, and pinwheels, that were then used to identify to gardeners which plots were available for all to harvest from.

Fundraising for the Garden

How to Go About Raising Money for Your Garden

When trying to fundraising for your garden, it is important to coordinate with Marion-Polk Food Share on who you are asking resources or funding from. So, before approaching businesses ask the Food Share first to find out if we already have connections/donations/sponsorship with the business. That way we aren't requesting too much from one business, and we can help you if we have already been in contact with the business.

One of the most important aspects of fundraising for the garden is being able to articulate your mission. Be able to stand firm and know exactly what you are asking for; taking a timeline and a list of everything you need with you to show someone your ideas helps show your organization and commitment (refer back to the "stump speech.")

Be sure to have something to leave behind; a letter, a business card, a plan for your project. Make sure your contact has a way to get in touch with you later.

Another way to potentially assist in the financial burden of gardens is to charge gardeners a flat fee for plots. This would allow you to maintain a specific account for garden that helps you with repairs and overall upkeep. Be transparent about what the fee will go toward and try and work with gardeners if that isn't something they can afford.

You may choose to facilitate the keeping of funds for your garden on your own, but you also have the option to ask the Food Share to hold and keep track of funds for your garden.

Writing Proposals for Funds

A valuable resource that might be considered a hidden gem is your local organizations that could help you and your garden out with things like funding and donations. If you are first starting out or if you need to fund a large project, it would be a good idea to reach out to your local Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions Club, or other large service groups.

It is always a good idea to chat with local business to try and make connections that are mutually beneficial and can support growth for you both. You can always ask Marion-Polk Food Share for a letterhead that shows support for community funds.

What to Include When Writing a Proposal

- Share your story and how your garden got started; this helps demonstrate the incredible impact community gardens have on their community!
- Paint a picture; this helps give people a better understanding of who you are, what the issue is that you are impacting, your proposal, needs (yours/community), action (plan), statement, anticipated outcomes (if it depends on funding, say so), measure results, budget (quote sheet or something similar that is tangible).
- Share a moment of success with gardeners or the community to give an example of the impact that the garden makes.

Chapter Five: Gardening Topics

- Building Your Soil: Lasagna Gardens
- Easy Planting for Beginning Gardeners
- Willamette Valley Planting Calendar
- Perennial Crops
- *Spotlight: Dayspring Community Garden*
- Composting in Community Gardens
- Produce Preservation
- Pests and Good Bugs
- Plant Diseases
- Seed Saving Basics
- Winterizing the Garden
- Further Resources



Building Your Soil: Lasagna Gardens

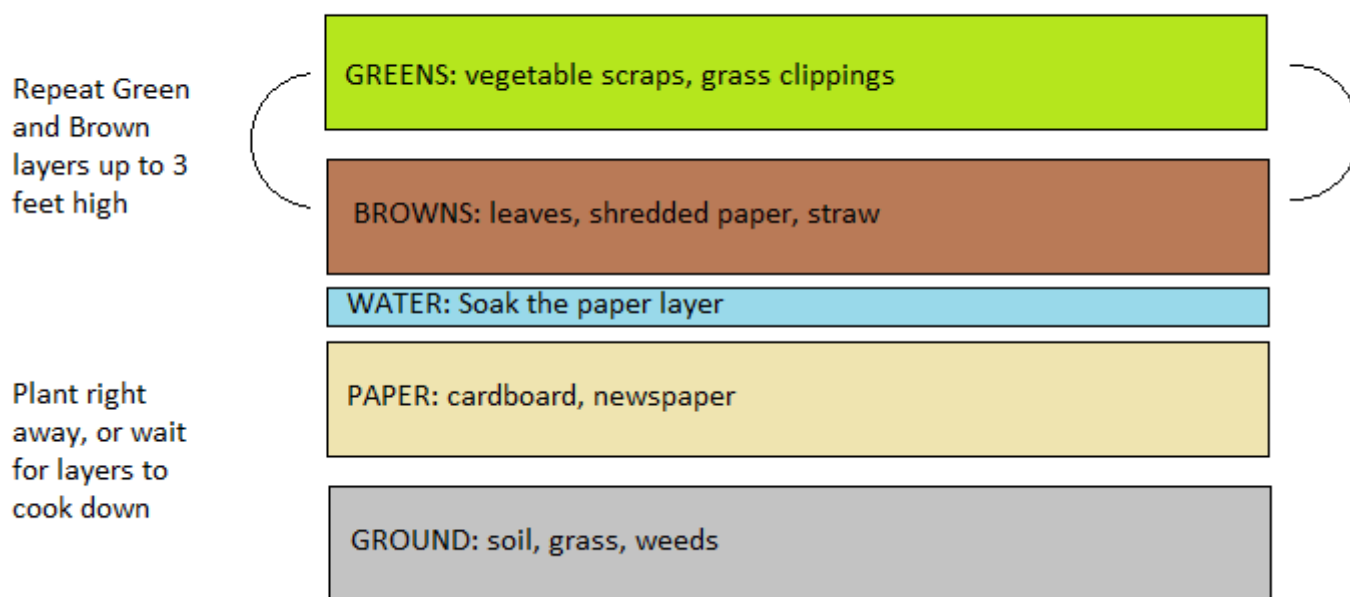
Soil, hands-down, is the most important part of your garden experience. You cannot grow strong, nutritious plants, without the help of strong, nutritious soil.

You can always start with garden soil or planting mix, but often these mixes from big box stores include chemicals, and inorganic fertilizers. If you want to choose organic soil, rich in nutrients, you need not spend a lot of money on these mixes. Instead, consider building your own soil, which begins with rich, organic matter, and a combination of textures.

Consider lasagna gardening as a method to build continually nourishing garden beds for your plants. With this method, you can either prep your beds and leave them to decompose and create a rich base, or you can plant directly into them and your plants will continue to feed as the components break down.

This is an easy way to not only begin a new garden (by starting with a foundation of good soil), but it also is a good idea to add these ingredients to your garden beds when you put them “to bed” for the winter. Let these layers muddle together all winter and they’ll give your garden beds a healthy start in the spring.

LASAGNA GARDENING



Keeping good soil also means ensure that from year-to-year, your soil has the proper nutrients to feed your plants. Do this by amending the soil each season with mulches, compost, and even organic manures.

Laying straw or leaves over your garden beds throughout the winter can protect soil from leaching these important ingredients.

However you amend your soil, be sure to avoid any hay, straw, or weed matter that has released seeds. This can cause quite a headache when they begin to emerge the next season.

Easy Planting for Beginning Gardeners

We often hear that new gardeners are intimidated by the prospect of planning and maintaining a garden. Those of us who have been gardening for multiple seasons can recognize that much of gardening is continual learning, and once you have the basics down, the rest is experimenting and learning from your experiences.

If you do have gardeners who do not know where to start, you can suggest some simple tips to help get them going.

Tips for Beginning Gardeners:

- Plant what you know your family will want to eat
- Plant high-yield plants like cherry tomatoes, peas, herbs, or potatoes
- Limit yourself to only a few kinds of plants the first year
- Choose plants that are drought tolerant
- Start with established seedlings for most plants, instead of seeds

To support new gardeners in your community garden, you may consider pairing them with more experienced gardeners as mentees, offering handout materials and workshops (which Marion-Polk Food Share staff can assist with), or even simply placing new gardeners in a bed next to a more experienced gardener in hopes that the conversations and observation will occur naturally. Whatever you do, be conscious of the challenges of first-time-gardening and encourage new gardeners to stick with it in order to see success.

For helpful, thorough curriculum on how to start as a beginning gardener, refer to the Seed to Supper classes taught through Marion-Polk Food Share each spring.



Willamette Valley Planting Calendar

Knowing when to plant what crops for the ultimate success in your garden is essential, especially to your own region. This is a crop planting chart, provided through the Seed to Supper Curriculum and Oregon Food Bank, which is specific to the Willamette Valley. This should help you identify when and how to plant specific crops throughout the season.

Common Crop Chart

Crop	Planting Window	Footprint	Planting method	Height	Days to harvest	Some shade ok?	Single or 2-week succession
Basil	March-May	12" x 12"	Transplant or row	Medium	90-120	Full sun only	Succession
Beans, snap (bush)	May-July	12" x 12"	Row or banded	Medium	60-70	Some shade ok	Succession
Beans, snap (pole)	May-June	4" x 4" trellised	Row or banded	Tall	70-90	Full sun only	Succession
Beets	March-June	4" x 4"	Row or banded	Short	50-80	Some shade ok	Succession
Broccoli	March-Aug	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	55-90	Full sun only	Single
Cabbage	April-June	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	80-90	Full sun only	Single
Carrots	March-July 15	3" x 3"	Row or banded	Short	70-90	Some shade ok	Succession
Cauliflower	April-July 15	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	90-150	Full sun only	Single
Chard	April-July	12" x 12"	Transplant or row	Medium	50-60	Some shade ok	Single
Cilantro	March-June	12" x 12"	Transplant	Short	60-90	Some shade ok	Succession
Collard greens	May-July	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	80-100	Some shade ok	Single
Corn (sweet)	April-June	12" x 12"	Row	Tall	70-110	Full sun only	Single
Cucumbers	May-June	6" x 6" trellised	Transplant or hill	Medium	55-75	Full sun only	Single
Eggplant	May-June	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	70-75	Full sun only	Single
Garlic	Sept-Oct	4" x 4"	Row	Short	220-300	Full sun only	Single
Herbs (perennial)	Fall or spring	24" x 24" variable	Transplant or hill	Medium	Perennial	Some shade ok	Single
Kale	May-July	12" x 12"	Transplant	Medium	60-70	Some shade ok	Single
Leeks	March-May	4" x 4"	Transplant or row	Short	120	Some shade ok	Single
Lettuce	March-Sept	6" x 6"	Row or banded	Short	65-80	Some shade ok	Succession
Onions	March-May	4" x 4"	Transplant	Short	100-120	Some shade ok	Single
Parsley	March-June	12" x 12"	Row or banded	Short	80-90	Some shade ok	Single
Parsnips	April-May	3" x 3"	Row or banded	Short	110-120	Some shade ok	Single
Peas	Feb-May	4" x 4" trellised	Row or banded	Medium	75-100	Some shade ok	Succession
Peppers	May-June	12" x 12"	Transplant or hill	Medium	80-100	Full sun only	Single
Potatoes	March-June	12" x 12"	Hill	Medium	70-120	Some shade ok	Single
Radishes	March-Sept	3" x 3"	Row or banded	Short	25-35	Some shade ok	Succession
Spinach	April & Sept	4" x 4"	Row or banded	Short	40-50	Some shade ok	Succession
Squash, summer	May-June	36" x 36"	Transplant or hill	Medium	55-70	Full sun only	Single
Squash, winter	May	6' x 6' vine	Transplant or hill	Medium	90-150	Full sun only	Single
Tomatoes	May	36" x 36"	Transplant	Tall	60-85	Full sun only	Single
Watermelon	June-July	12" x 12" trellised	Transplant or hill	Medium	55-85	Full sun only	Single

KEY	Planting method		Height	Short	Under 12"
	Transplant	Transplant into garden as a start		Medium	12" - 35"
	Row, banded, hill	See Chapter 3, "Direct Seeding"		Tall	36" or taller

Sources: OSU Extension publication EM 9027, Territorial Seed Catalog, OFB garden records

Watering Practices and Tips

Especially when a gardener first begins, they may be confused about how much to water, when to water, and how to water their garden plot. There are many opinions about this topic, but by following some simple steps, gardeners can see success with their plantings.

Watering Methods:

Hand Watering—this can be the most tedious form of watering a garden, especially with a large plot. Although it can be time-consuming, hand watering is the most direct, intentional, and water saving method. Usually with a spray nozzle on the end of a hose, or a watering can, gardeners are able to water directly where the plant needs moisture. Gardeners are able to control the amount of water distributed, and avoid wasting water. Plants in container gardens and pots should be watered more frequently, as they dry out much more quickly.

Sprinkler System—less time-consuming than hand-watering, this method gives a broadcast of water to an entire area. Although very helpful to farmers who may be watering one, condensed crop, this may not be the best method for community gardens. Along with plants, this method also waters all weeds in the area, and can be wasteful if you are watering walk ways or soil between plants.

Drip Irrigation—the most direct and easy method where you set up lines that water directly to your plant bases. Although convenient and simple, it can be a costly investment and certainly is not needed for gardening in small spaces. If you are spending multiple hours watering small garden spaces by hand, this may be a valuable tool, but it is in no way needed in the community garden.

Many gardeners wonder how much they should be watering their plants, and truly, different plants like different types of soils and water quantity. But a general rule of thumb is that if you can poke a finger into the soil at least 2-3 inches and still feel moisture, your plants are fine. If you do try this and feel completely bone-dry soil, you do need to water more and/or more often.

Keep in mind that some plants do not like to have water directly sprayed on their leaves. For instance, plants in the cucumber family (cucumbers, squashes, melons) do NOT like to have water rest on their leaves. This lends to growth of powdery mildew and a greying look on the leaves. To avoid this, water the plant at the base.



Perennial Crops

Community gardens are typically associated with garden beds or raised beds that are rented out to gardeners, but often these spaces grow and incorporate different elements, including perennial (returning year-to-year) crops. While growing perennials is typically discouraged to avoid a new gardener inheriting plants the next season, it has become a trend to create community shared spaces with perennial flowers, berries, or trees.

With these crops, you must take into account the year round maintenance that goes with them for successful crops, and either appoint someone to maintain them, or be willing to oversee them yourself.

Tips for Perennial Crops:

Blueberries—plant multiple bushes, as they need to attract pollinators and be able to cross pollinate. Consider varieties that set fruit when you want to harvest, and know that some blueberries come on earlier than others.

Strawberries—plant in a bed, or a space where you don't mind the plot growing (they spread). Also, strawberries peak at three years; after then, they should be replanted (or, plant the runners)

Cane Berries—(raspberries, blackberries, Marion berries): choose a place that will not shade out other plants (they do get tall), and be aware that they do spread from year to year. You will need to know how to properly prune for highest yield, as well.

Apple Trees—choose small (dwarf) varieties, unless you have a VERY large garden. Large trees will eventually shade out a large area. Try trellising varieties, or trees that have multiple varieties grafted on.

Other Fruit Trees— (peaches, plums, figs): again, choose dwarf varieties to avoid overwhelming your space. Generally, these trees are not recommended for community gardens.

Perennial Herbs—choose a location that you plan to keep an herb garden for quite some time. Give new plants plenty of space, and know that they will expand year to year. Some herbs, like cilantro and basil, may re-seed, but generally are considered annuals.



Dayspring Community Garden



Dayspring Community Garden resides on the campus of Dayspring Church in Keizer, and was first opened to gardeners in 2017. Before the garden even came to be, Dayspring Church became a host site for Marion-Polk Food Share's six week gardening class called Seed to Supper. From this, the church became inspired to provide space for people to be able to grow their own food. Church members identified a space on the property in 2015 that was currently unused, the church agreed to transform the space into a garden, and a group of dedicated volunteers put in many hours to get the garden in place.

The garden now has 20 raised beds, 4 pollinator plant beds, apple trees donated by Keith Meyers, gooseberries, grapes, and raspberries. Benches at the garden were put together by eagle scout Ryan Wagner, Dennis Johnson installed drip irrigation, and Salem Leadership Foundation donated picnic benches for gardeners to rest.

A great community space, the garden and Dayspring Church host events and continues to host Seed to Supper Classes hosted by Marion-Polk Food Share and Marion County Master Gardeners.



SPOTLIGHT: Incorporating Perennials

Dayspring Community Garden received a wonderful donation of dwarf apple trees for their garden space, and so made great use of them along the northern fence of their garden. Being intentional about where and how you plant trees like these is very, very important. Dayspring made a great choice to plant these to the north of their garden (so that when they grow larger, they will not shade any of their garden plots from southern sun exposure). These trees also back up against a fence with a trellis designed to keep them maintained and easy to harvest.

Composting in Community Gardens

Composting at your community garden is a useful way to give back rich nutrients to your plants year after year. Food scraps (no meats or dairy), yard debris, shredded paper, and even coffee grounds and filters, can be put into a recycle bin to break down over time creating nutrient-rich compost to return to plant beds.

Follow these easy steps to create a successful compost pile:

1. Add equal parts of carbon rich (brown) ingredients and nitrogen rich (green) ingredients
2. Turn regularly
3. Keep it moist (compost needs water, and should feel like a wrung out sponge)
4. Avoid problem materials (like large chunks and weed seeds)

Although compost is a wonderful resource for community gardens, it can often present many challenges to the community; you should be aware of these challenges and willing to work towards a solution before beginning a compost program. Here are some of the most common challenges found in community garden composting:

- Gardeners don't take the time to turn the compost (resulting in compost that takes a very, very long time to decompose)
- Gardeners include improper ingredients in compost (which can attract annoying pests)
- There is not an adequate mixture of brown and green ingredients (making a soupy, smelly, or too dry compost pile)
- Gardeners add large pieces to compost that won't break down (like corn stalks and sunflower stems)
- Weeds are included in the compost, and if the pile does not get hot enough, viable seeds fill the compost (making it a weed garden next season)

If you do want to have a compost pile to serve your community garden, consider these tips:

- Create a regular schedule for turning the pile
- Provide tools like compost aerators or pitch forks to make the task easier
- Have printed directions or educate your gardeners about the process
- Include multiple piles so that you have a succession of when compost is ready to use



Produce Preservation

When you have an abundance of produce available for harvest in your garden, you may not be able to use all of it. Of course, you can always donate it, or find someone else who can benefit from its use, but if you do like garden-grown produce all year round, you will want to consider how to preserve your harvest for long-term use.

You will need to determine the best way to preserve each kind of produce item you have in abundance, which will also depend on how you wish to utilize the produce later in the season.

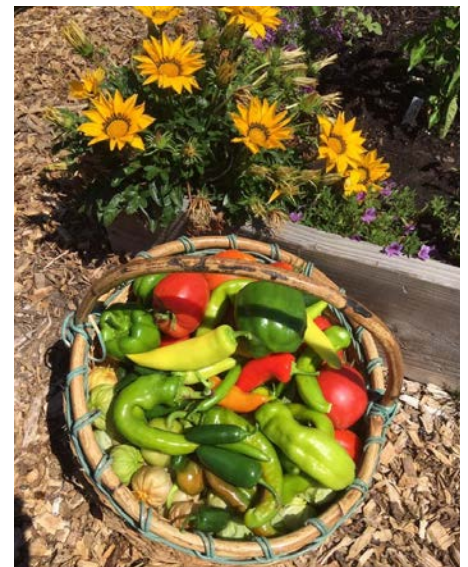
Canning—canning works well with fruit and highly acidic produce like berries and tomatoes. You do want to be careful to distinguish the difference between canning and pressure cooking, and be sure to follow strict guidelines for the right pH of each product. Refer to Master Preservers for the best information.

Pickling—for produce items that are not high in acid, you can easily pickle them using a mixture of vinegar, sugar, water, and salt. This high-acid mixture allows for preservation and the absence of toxic bacteria. You can pickle many produce items, including but not limited to, cucumbers, beets, onions, garlic, and even strawberries!

Freezing—most produce freezes well, and if you have the freezer space, you can easily stock up on many crops to use throughout the season. Some of the best produce items to freeze include corn, green beans, berries, peas, tomatoes, and peppers. You should research which items work best when blanched first, and which can simply be frozen right away.

Dehydrating—although more complex in equipment, you may find dehydrating produce to be a great way to enjoy the harvest throughout the year. Dehydrators dry your produce and rid them of moisture, but concentrate good vitamins and nutrients. Fruits, tomatoes, and peppers dehydrate well, and can be used in baked goods and many recipes throughout the year.

Connect OSU Extension Master Preservers for more useful preservation information.



Pests and Good Bugs

Naturally, in any organic garden, there lies a flourishing environment for bugs. Some of them are pests that eat our produce, and others are good bugs that we should encourage.

It is important that we are able to recognize these different critters and understand their place in our gardens.

If you are growing produce organically, you must come to terms with the fact that some of your produce may be compromised by bugs. Essentially, you will need to identify the level of pest pressure you are willing to cope with in your garden, and formulate your management from that. For example, flea beetles (tiny, black beetles that feast on leafy greens) can be a pain, and devour holes in radish leaves (but is that truly an issue for you, when they leave the radish root alone completely?)

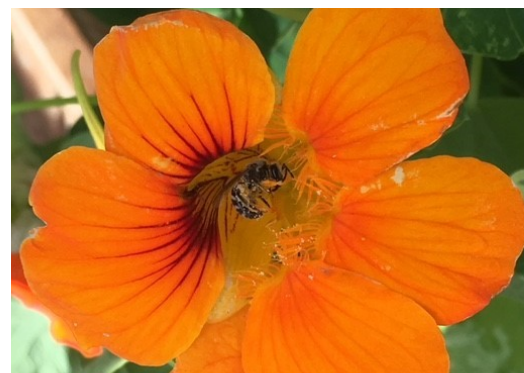
Some bugs that we consider to be ugly or annoying (praying mantises, spiders, ladybug larvae) are truly beneficial to your garden. Some may feed on pests like aphids or cabbage worms, and so nurturing some bugs in your garden is important to the ecosystem.

You will notice many bee-like bugs, too, and many are actually excellent pollinators (a requirement of many fruits and vegetables to even evolve).

To encourage good bugs in your garden, avoid using chemicals, provide multiple varieties of plants in your growing spaces, consider using a pest-attracting plant away from your garden space, and plant vibrant, consistently flowering, native flowers that attract these beneficial bugs.

If you do struggle with pest management, there are many organic methods to deter them from munching on your produce including washes with natural soaps and oils. A good spray with a hose often helps remove many pests (but must be done frequently).

For more information, bug identification, or how to best manage pests in your garden, contact the OSU Extension Master Gardeners.



Plant Diseases

Plant diseases really are a complex topic, and in no way could be covered in just a few pages here. However, you may find some common issues in your community garden that puzzle you. These quick suggestions may give you some insight.

There are MANY reasons why your plants may not look ideal, but here are a few common challenges that many gardeners see. You will find in researching, that many plant diseases can be prevented by proper plant care, but many are also environmental and are unavoidable, even to large-scale farmers.

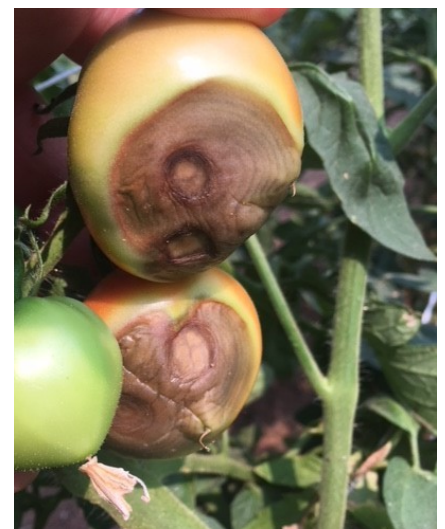
If you really would like to know what is wrong with a particular plant in your garden, you can even take a sample of the plant down to your local extension office and have the Master Gardeners help identify issues for you.

Powdery Mildew — a mildew that can affect many crops, but is most commonly found on the cucurbit family (cucumbers, squashes (summer and winter), and melons). Often caused by warm, humid weather. Can be avoided by watering plants at the base and avoiding sitting water on large leaves, and by ensure that plants are in a sunny location. Can spread quickly.

Blight— a mildew, bacteria, or mold that affects all kinds of plants. Brown spots develop on leaves and eventually can kill leaves until they drop off of the plant. You can avoid this kind of issue by watering at the base of the plant to avoid water spots that encourage mold on the leaves. We typically see blight in seasons when spring is wet and humid.

Blossom End Rot— a bacterial rot that starts to waterlog fruits at the bottom (blossom end). Will rot the fruit and turn it a papery-white, or if another fungus latches on, can turn black. This commonly happens to fruits on pepper and tomato plants, and often signifies a lack of calcium in the soil. Soil amendments (for the next planting) and direct watering can help.

Refer to Oregon State University Master Gardeners for the most accurate and useful information on plant diseases.



Seed Saving Basics



Cost effective, and sustainable, saving seeds is a useful way to continue your garden harvest year after year. Some plants even set seeds which are great in cooking, like coriander (which is the seed of a cilantro plant, and we've probably all had those go to seed before as they tend to bolt quickly in our climate).

If you are saving seeds for planting, you must recognize the very small window of gathering the seed before it falls to the ground (the plant's natural inclination to sow seeds for the next year). If you wait too long, you may find yourself with an overwhelming crop the next season.

Essentially, seeds need to be collected, cleaned, and thoroughly dried (sun dried is just fine). Once entirely dry, you can place seeds in small envelopes or bags (label them!) and keep them in a cool, dry place until you want to plant the next year.

Seeds easy to collect and save:

- Tomatoes
- Pepper
- Eggplant
- Beans and Peas
- Lettuce
- Cilantro
- Dill
- Onion

Seeds that are difficult to save:

(because they cross-pollinate and mix varieties)

- Cucumber
- Melons
- Squash



Winterizing the Garden

Harvest is certainly not the last step in keeping a garden. At the end of the season, once all produce is collected and consumed or preserved, you must take care to winterize the garden. Be aware that this is often a difficult time to wrangle energy from gardeners, but making it a point to ensure that all beds are winterized will help your soil rejuvenate over the winter, and will also save you from having to entirely start over come spring.

Proper winterization will keep down weeds in your garden space over the winter, and will also protect the soil. Essentially, you must find a way to cover the soil in your garden. Leaving it exposed allows for wind and heavy rains to wash out good nutrients that could benefit you in the next season.

To winterize your beds, you first should remove any leftover plant matter from annuals (including seeds, rotting produce, etc.). If you have perennials in your garden, you can remove weeds from around the plants and follow the same steps, just leaving the plants in ground. Then, cover your beds with any kind of mulch (you can use leaves, newspapers, cardboard, sterile straw, etc.).

You may also chose to use a cover crop which can actually add essential nutrients back into your soil for when you return to planting the next spring.

Good cover crops to use in order to replenish nitrogen in your soil include:

- Vetch
- Buckwheat
- Red Clover (NOT white clover)
- Annual Ryegrass or Winter Rye

The challenge with cover crops is that you must have a plan to either pull or turn them in come spring. Thick crops like vetch or grasses can be difficult to pull out entirely, so they must be tilled. As you can imagine, this can be difficult in small raised beds. If you have in-ground plots, this may be a good option for you, as a small tiller can easily turn the soil over for you in the spring.

Alternatively, if you have the time, you can simply mow a cover crop in the spring, then cover with black plastic for 2-4 weeks to kill the rest of the crop before planting your garden.



Further Resources

Marion-Polk Food Share Website

<http://www.marionpolkfoodshare.org/communitygardens>

Oregon Food Bank (who also runs garden programs):

<https://www.oregonfoodbank.org/our-work/programs/education/gardening/>

OSU Extension (general wealth of research and knowledge):

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening>

OSU Marion County Master Gardeners (who provide many educational classes to the public and the community demonstration garden):

<https://marioncomga.org/>

OSU Master Preservers (for information on food storage and preservation):

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mfp>

OSU Polk County Master Gardeners:

<https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/polk>

Portland Parks & Recreation (PP&R runs Portland's community garden program):

<https://www.portlandoregon.gov/parks/39846?>

Pringle Creek Community (provides local urban farming courses):

<http://pringlecreek.com/urban-farming/>

U.S. Department of Agriculture:

<https://www.nal.usda.gov/home-gardening>

See many more specific gardening resources available on our website at mpfscommunitygardens.org

If there are specific educational needs or resources that your garden needs, please do not hesitate to be in touch with Food Share staff; we often can connect gardeners with specific resources or offer classes to help address specific gardening challenges.



